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## Some Comments On The Assessment Of The Pedagogic Process

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### Abstract

The assessment of pedagogic process from the aspect of teacher's quality receives increasing attention. The main objective in developing these indicators is to provide a tool for continuous quality improvement and support institution's quality enhancement efforts. The paper discusses possible factors influencing students' attitudes to their teachers, as well as the problem of constructing valid and reliable instruments for objective measurements.

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### 1. Introduction

The core of the education process is not only providing information. Characteristics that participate in efficient education include among many others also the teacher's quality aspect. The teacher stimulates, helps to develop student's critical thinking, motivates students to deepen the interest in specific topics, and this way the teacher may be the critical point in the output characteristics of the student. Nowadays, the highest ambition of any educational institution is to have a well accepted professional team consisting of professionals that are valued by students for their professionalism and personal characteristics. The review of literature offers a lot of suggestions how to develop objective measures for the assessment of the educational process itself. Here we have two different variables: studying the curriculum and the teacher. The curriculum of the studied subject may be composed by supervisors and reassessed by professional boards. The more difficult problem is how to assess the professional who provides the

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education itself. One of possible criteria is the student's opinion on the quality of the educational process. Nowadays, the worldwide experience shows that assessment of the education by students (i.e. assessment of the teacher, teaching plans, organization of the education, educational methods) is asserted. Feedback from students has many critical points. In the paper we will focus on the problem of validity of student's evaluations, stressing mainly the factor of establishment of opinion and the problem of the construction of assessment scales.

## **2. Pedagogic process assessment**

School administrators are well aware that teachers matter for the achievements of students. It is also generally recognized that there is a wide variation in teachers' effectiveness both within and between schools (Rockoff et al., 2008). Many concluded that while teachers are hugely important, variation in teachers' effectiveness is based on unobservable characteristics that are difficult if not impossible to measure

### *2.1. Fox effect experiment*

Routine use of students' assessments brought two questionable issues – the validity of the assessment by students, and the validity of measuring tools (scales). One must point to the fact, that at the routine use of assessment scales any of their users (i.e. employer) is not interested what exactly scales reflect, how much the monitored characteristics correlate with the efficiency of education, what may deform students evaluations. The problem is very well illustrated by the experiment, which entered the professional literature as the effect of dr. Fox. In 1973, physicians, teachers and psychologists dealing with post-gradual education realized an interesting trial. Professional actor was introduced to academically educated listeners as Dr. Fox, the highly valued capacity for application of mathematics in behavioural sciences. He performed with great enthusiasm and perfect rhetoric art a lecture, where the content was prepared in advance on low professional level with low comprehensibility. The actor was instructed to lead the discussion in a confused way, use neologisms in his speech and keep contradictory standpoints. Simultaneously, he should decline the topic with humorous comments. One group of listeners followed the lecture in vivo, and two other groups watched video projection of the lecture. The evaluation of the lecture and of the lecturer was in all three cases very good. According to the authors (Naftulin et al., 1973; Mareš, 1988) the experiment proved that results of students assessment may be substantially more influenced by personality characteristics of the teacher than by the quality of the presented topic, what consequently means, that students' satisfaction with the education may be only illusion which differs from the real state.

### *2.2. Results and comments*

Concerning the use of assessment rating scales at such evaluations, the question of their elaboration during the preparation period is of utmost importance. Very often, measuring tools created by the institution itself, for their specific purpose, are used, while more objective data would be gained by making use of standardized scales that are developed through years and are proved at extensive samples. Also other „technical aspects” cannot be neglected, as e.g the question of anonymity of the evaluation. Results didn't confirm that anonymous evaluation gives more valid results or that non-anonymous evaluations give less valid results (Ferjenčík, 2002). The validity of results depends also on the time of the scale administration. The point is that the evaluator should have appropriate time period for getting acquainted with the teacher and the way of education. When the tool is administered too early, students cannot appropriately assess a lot of facts. When the tool is administered too late, the interfering influence of emotions and attitudes evoked by the coming examination, behaviour of the examiner, and the result of the exam may appear. Experience showed that the best solution is: to administer the scale either in the period when the course nears to the end, but students still didn't pass the exam. Students have the global impression about the quality of education and are engaged in assessment. Or the other possibility is to realize the course assessment at the beginning of the next semester. Students still remember the process of education, time interperiod had ameliorated emotional reaction on the results of examinations, and consequently students are able to assess the quality of the course with deeper insight.

It is also important how students are informed about the purpose of the assessment. Results in this field found an interesting trend. When students are told that gained data will be used for administrative decisions about the teacher, they are more benevolent in assessing the teacher and the course. They are more accurate when told, that results will be used for improving the process of education, or for personal needs of the teacher. Validity of the assessment is not influenced by the measuring instrument itself, but also the object of the assessment – in this case the subject of the course. Subjects with rather quantitative nature are usually receive lower rates than subjects of qualitative nature (so called „soft subjects“). Of course this is not a rule, because other variables play the role e.g. peculiarities of the teacher, place of the subject in the study plan or whether the education is connected with high demands on the activity of the student. Significant differences give also the status of the subject in the studying plan, i.e. whether the subject is compulsory or optional. The other factor is the bound of the subject to the main specialization of the student. Subjects that are according to the students marginal to their main specialization and don't relate directly the selected studying topic, are usually assessed lower. The fact proved by research is that the set of cognitive expectations and attitudes toward the specific subject is fixed quite early, perhaps during few first hours, and doesn't change till the end of the course. Also some subject may have the advantage or disadvantage granted simply by their position in the schedule.

Interesting are also results concerning the assessment of the teacher. First we must notice that here the student encounters some difficulties – he/she must assess and differentiate between attributes of the pedagogic activity of the person in the position of the teacher and his/her personality traits. Feldman identified as significant the following personality characteristics (the order follows their rating significance):

- energy and enthusiasm,
- teacher's flexibility, openness to changes,
- management of the education – leadership, decisiveness,
- positive relationship toward people, helpfulness, tolerance,
- intelligence, cultural and aesthetic sensitivity,
- self assurance,
- emotional stability,
- friendliness, sociability (Mareš, 1988).

The other variable is the pedagogic experience of the teacher. It is found that the relationship between the length of the teacher's pedagogic practice and efficiency of education mustn't be linear. The question at what age and level of experience the teacher is most efficient, is discussed. The other aspect is how strict the teacher is in the assessment of the student in the examinations. The simple relationship was expected: the teacher who is more accurate will be assessed less positively than the teacher who is more benevolent. However, results proved that the assessment of the teacher is only slightly influenced by the way of his/her approach to examinations. Important aspect is teacher's engagement in students' voluntary activities. The assessment is more positive when the teacher participates in discussions with students or in their free time activities.

### **3. Conclusion**

Considering the goal of high standards of the process of education, we may expect that the evaluation of the teachers' quality will become the routine practice of university management. Current practice of using scales generated by non-professionals doesn't meet the requirement of validity of gained results. Therefore we must keep in mind that to employ students' evaluations as a valid instrument of the assessment of the quality of the pedagogic process has many aspects that should be taken into the account when using such evaluations for administrative purposes. On the other hand we may say that analysis of students' attitudes toward their teachers and towards the course of education offers valuable information that may be valuable for the efficiency of the process of education in general, as well as for pedagogic development of the teacher.

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